I. GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

Habitat

The Timbira habitat extends from 3° to 9° S. latitude and from 42° to 49° W. longitude—through the northeastern part of the Central Brazilian steppe area, where that area adjoins the southeastern tip of the Amazon rain forests. The tropical forest extends back of the coastal steppe strip liable to inundation, beginning at a point on the Tocantins somewhat above the Araguaya confluence, and includes the entire Gurupy basin, the middle and lower Pindaré, the lower Grajahú, and the lower Mearim. Its domain comprises the present habitat of the following Timbira tribes: the Western Gaviões; the Krẽyé of Cajuapára; the Krẽyé and Kukóekamekra of Bacabal.*

But by far the greatest part of Timbira territory is covered by high steppes and dry forest; tall timber occurs only in the form of *galeria* forests along the brooks and rivers, also at times on the slopes of the so-called mountains (*serras*), at the foot of which these watercourses usually develop from many minor springs. These inextensive wooded tracts are of great economic significance for the steppe Indian, since they offer the only soil suitable for his primitive husbandry.

The *galeria* forest further provides not only the material for housebuilding, but also the extremely important burity palm (*Mauritia flexuosa*), the leaves of which furnish the main material for basketry while its fruits are edible and its trunks are made into logs carried in relay races. Further, there are the oleaginous babassu palm (*Orbignia speciosa*); the sororóca (*Heliconia* sp.) with its gigantic leaves, indispensable in Indian cookery; and many other useful plants.

The predominant part of the Timbira steppes consists of *campos cerrados*, that is, grass tracts with more or less dense stands of trees and bushes. Absolutely pure steppes I have seen only in the upper Pindaré country, and even these were only of minor extent. The two Timbira tribes of that region—Krĩkatí and Pụkóbye—are accordingly called by the other members of their branch Popéykateye (inhabitants of true [or beautiful], pey, steppes, põ).

The prevailing grass species is Capim agreste (*Pannascum* sp.). Noteworthy among the trees are the sucupira (*Cassiea* sp.), which symbolizes for the Timbira the power of resistance; the sambahyba (*Couratella* sp.), whose rough leaves serve to polish wood; the pau de leite (*Sapium* sp.), whose latex when mixed with powdered charcoal forms the favorite pigment; the tucum palm (*Astrocaryum* sp.), important for its fibers; the almecegueira (*Protium* sp.) with an odorous rosin much used in decorative outfits; finally, the fruit-bearing piquy (*Caryocar* sp.), bacury (*Platonia* sp.), and the mangabeira (*Hancornia* sp.).

The soil is mostly sandy, more rarely clayey, and still more rarely rocky. The northern Timbira country is rather flat, rising only quite imperceptibly southward. Even the most recent maps (Stieler, 1928) crowd the southern half with mountain chains—to the grave disappointment of an observer on the spot, who finds simply mesas and small plateaus with steep slopes, sporadic residual phenomena, mostly

* In the rendering of the aboriginal terms with which the monograph bristles it seemed best to adhere to the orthography established for The Apinayé, a slight simplification of that chosen by Nimuendajú himself. A tilde over vowels indicates nasalization; a short hook below a vowel designates it as postpalatal. The latter symbol is necessary, because it defines a phonemic difference. The following values hold for symbols requiring explanation:

ẽ = first German e in Ehe
õ = German o in ohne
ũ, ũ = as in German
ɲ = half vocalic ng
š = English sh
č = Spanish ch
ž = French j
x = German ch in ach
' = glottal stop